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LB 408

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Thompson, you're recognized to open on AM1849 to LB 408.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. This amendment gives you the opportunity to have another set of cuts that will help create a tighter relationship between spending and revenue. This is a 10 percent cut to the state road construction side only, not cities or counties. And the amendment is drafted so it will not result in a fuel tax increase. This is my new color today, this goldenrod color, we've been talking about it. Has just the details of this. This is a way to provide another cut. And these are hard things to do. But we've been cutting everybody else. A cut that would bring \$67 million, \$67.6 million to the General Fund, and bring us closer to our goal. You could look at it from two ways. If there are things that you have a lot of concern about in the budget, and you want to take another shot, if this goes on, you've got a way to do it. If you just want to make sure that we're keeping the overall revenue price down, this works in that way too. In fiscal year 2000, Nebraska was ranked twelfth in the country in state and local spending for highways. In addition, Nebraska was ranked tenth in the country in state and local highway spending as a percent of general spending. Now, we've been listening over the last few weeks about how we're forty-ninth and fiftieth in public health, in mental health. We're very, very low in many, many areas. This is one area we're high. We're...we can, by just this small percent...and this is the same percent we're cutting in aid to all sorts of programs that we think are very important. And this would give this sector, this agency, the opportunity to contribute to our ability to balance our budget. And a lot of what is done in terms of highway projects...and this kind of takes me back to my former life as a county commissioner. But a lot can be done with staging, with how projects are rolled out, and how they are planned, to keep projects going. And I think that overall, when you have a \$338 million roads operation cash fund, \$338 million, this doesn't set us that far back. Now, I thought I'd been doing a pretty good job this session with keeping my cool. But the handout that you got with all the names scribbled in the corner, if the ceiling were lower, I probably could have hit it.